

Baird Stands Up for Math and Science Programs; Programs to Increase U.S. Competitiveness and Create Jobs (August 2, 2007)

Washington, D.C. - Responding to the need to increase job opportunities and keep U.S. citizens competitive in a 21st century economy, Congressman Brian Baird (WA-03), Chairman of the Research and Science Education Subcommittee and a member of the conference report committee, advocated for key programs in the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science Act (COMPETES Act).

In his role as a conferee, Chairman Baird helped secure funding for programs to create more qualified teachers in science and math fields and to support scientific research and innovation through the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Baird was also able to secure language emphasizing the importance of the social sciences.

“It’s clear that if America is going to remain competitive in the global marketplace, we need to bolster students’ success in math and science,” said Chairman Baird, whose subcommittee has jurisdiction over NSF. “This bill helps ensure that we increase job opportunities here at home; promote new technologies; bolster research opportunities; and support economic development in a 21st century economy.”

H.R. 2272 is based on the 2005 National Academies report, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm,” which found that the U.S. could stand to lose its competitive edge without immediate action. The report was produced at the request of a group of bipartisan Congressional lawmakers.

Recommendations from that report included in the provisions of H.R. 2272 are:

- Keeping the National Science Foundation and the NIST research labs on a 10-year doubling path;
- Creating thousands of new teachers and provide current teachers with content and instructive expertise in their area of teaching;
- Expanding programs to enhance the undergraduate education of the future science and engineering workforce;
- Expanding early career grant programs for young investigators at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy;
- Strengthening interagency planning and coordination for research infrastructure and information technology;
- Establishing an Advanced Research Projects Agency in Energy to recruit and hire the nation’s most talented scientists and engineers who will research and rapidly develop clean, revolutionary energy technologies to be pushed from the lab into the marketplace.

In conference negotiations, Baird offered an amendment to include social science as a priority for the National Science Foundation, which was approved. A provision had been included to prioritize physical and natural sciences at NSF.

"I firmly believe that social science, be it psychology, economics, political science or sociology, is a critical component in our efforts to keep the United States competitive in a global economy and keep our citizens safe and secure," continued Baird.

The bill also includes a provision introduced by Baird to maintain America's leadership in super-computing. This provision improves how key government agencies plan and coordinate their efforts to develop new strategies for innovative super-computing technologies, and will support key science and engineering initiatives.

"Information technology and innovation helps drive economic growth and development," continued Chairman Baird. "It creates high-wage career opportunities, provides for rapid communications throughout the world, and provides tools for closing the knowledge gap. The technical advances that led to today's super-computers are essential to securing U.S. scientific, industrial, and military competitiveness."

The legislative package authorizes a total of \$22 billion over fiscal years 2008 to 2010 for research, education and other programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF); \$2.65 billion for the research labs, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership and other activities at the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST), and \$17 billion, over fiscal years 2008 to 2010, for programs at the Department of Energy (DOE), including \$150 million for K-12 science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) educational programs.

"The agencies have a mission to achieve excellence in science, technology, and engineering," said Chairman Baird. "By funding basic research, teaching our children math and science, and investing in programs and policies that are of the highest quality, we're in turn developing a diverse and well-prepared workforce."

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